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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/23/2016
TAGS: PTER PGOV PHUM ASEC JO
SUBJECT: NINE SENTENCED TO DEATH FOR 2002 MA'AN UPRISINGS

REF: A. 05 AMMAN 4529

¶B. 05 AMMAN 470
¶C. AMMAN 1986
¶D. 05 AMMAN 6526

Classified By: Ambassador David Hale for Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

¶11. (U) SUMMARY: The State Security Court (SSC) sentenced nine of the 108 defendants in the 2002 Ma'an uprising (refs A, B) to death on March 22. The defendants, charged with carrying out terrorist acts, possessing automatic weapons, and illegal public assembly, claimed that their confessions were extracted under duress and denied attacking police during the uprising. END SUMMARY.

SENTENCES

¶12. (U) The main defendant and alleged ringleader in the case, Mohammad Shalabi, also known as Abu Sayaf, was present for the sentencing, along with the five other defendants in Jordanian custody condemned to death: Majdi Kreishan, 40; Omar Bazayah, 33; Abdul Fattah Kreishan, 26; Asri Abu Darwish, 37; and Khalil Asri. Asri's sentence, however, was quickly commuted to ten years imprisonment. Four other defendants - Mohammad Na'im Faraj; Khalil Na'im Faraj; Jamal Abkal; and Ali Abu-Hilalah - were sentenced to death in absentia. Of the remaining 98 defendants, two received five-year sentences, and 22 others were given sentences of one to three years. Seventy-four defendants were acquitted for lack of proof.

REACTION

¶13. (U) The defendants' lawyer, Hikmat Rawashdeh, said he was shocked by the "harsh and unjust" verdicts, and promised to appeal the sentences. Interviewed by Al Jazeera following the sentencing hearing, relatives of the sentenced defendants expressed anger, surprise, and dismay over the verdicts. Some claimed that they had been promised a royal pardon on several occasions.

¶14. (C) COMMENT: Ma'an has been the scene of violent unrest in past years, including riots prompted by a hike in fuel prices (1989) and a rise in the cost of bread (1996). Local anger over the court verdicts, combined with GOJ plans to reduce fuel subsidies on April 1 (ref C), could significantly raise the temperature in this volatile Jordanian town. END COMMENT.

HALE